

Lowell's Cross Point Towers

8

ECONOMIC GROWTH

***Goal Statement***

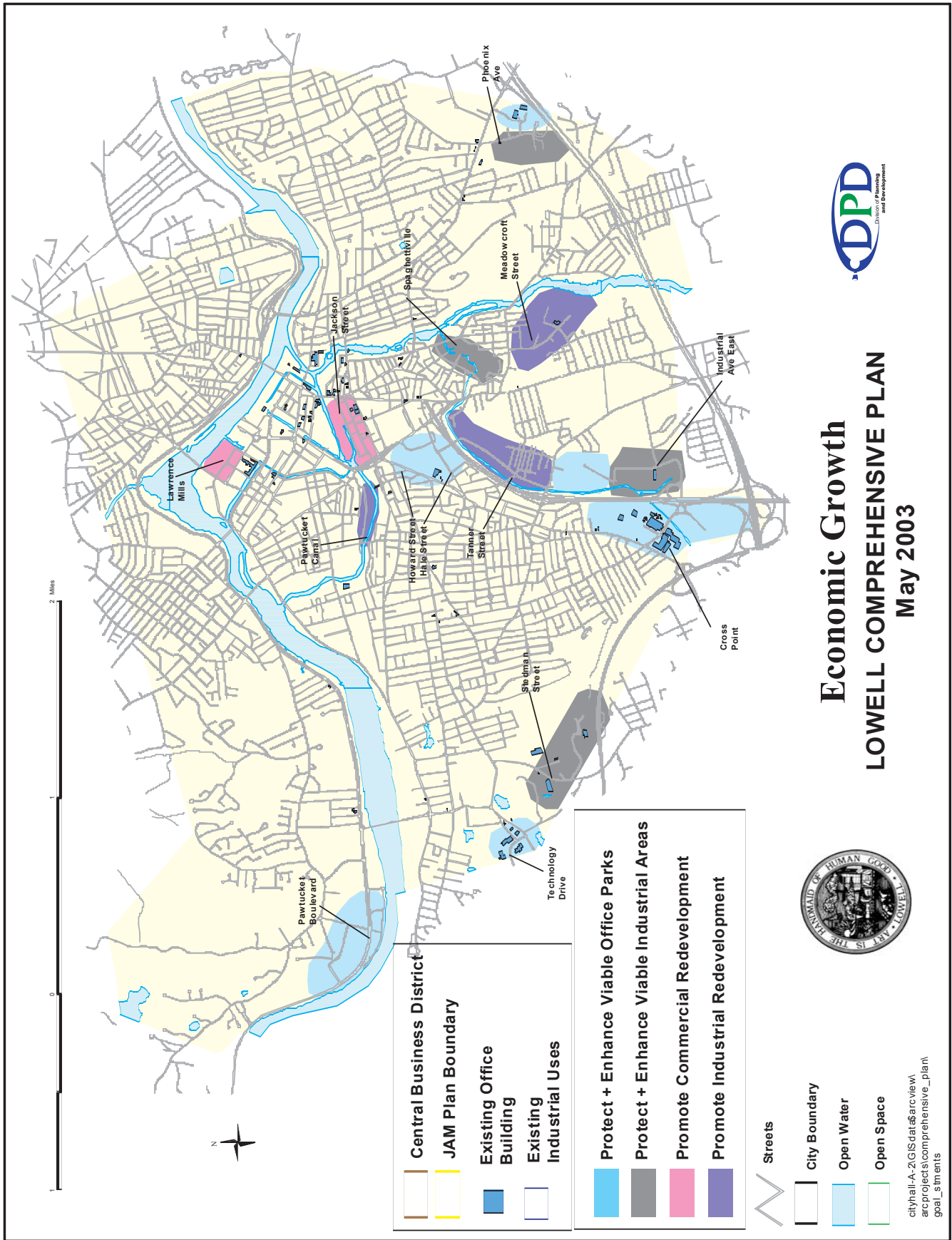
Lowell will maintain a diverse and robust economy with a variety of business development and employment opportunities located in healthy industrial centers and redeveloped commercial districts.

With over two million square feet of first-class commercial, industrial, and retail space located in modern office towers, renovated 19th century mills, and waterfront properties, the City of Lowell is a regional destination for business development. Lowell's public-private economic development team has produced investments of \$350 million in restoration, business development, and new economic growth during the City's revitalization.

In the next 20 years, Lowell will work to diversify its economy by attracting and retaining smaller businesses from a variety of industry sectors. In addition, the City of Lowell will continue to partner with local institutions, which offer businesses access to world-class research facilities, product development assistance, and cutting-edge educational and training programs.

Recognizing that creative and flexible knowledge workers are becoming the dominant resource sought by businesses making location decisions, Lowell will work to cultivate a strong well-educated workforce of creative professionals and work to stabilize the housing costs that are driving these desirable workers and their employers to other regions of the country. Lowell can be a highly desirable community to live in for employees of the growing industries in the City, in Boston, and the Greater Lowell region. Improving the quality of life in Lowell's neighborhoods and offering various amenities will be a key piece of developing this strong workforce and attracting the entrepreneurial minded creative professionals.

Through these efforts, combined with strengthening the City's existing office and industrial parks and facilitating the redevelopment of brownfield sites, Lowell can continue to cultivate and attract a variety of small and mid-size employers that will provide a stable and diverse economic base.



8.1 Recommendations and Action Steps

8.1.1 REDEVELOP REMEDIATED BROWNFIELD* SITES IN LOWELL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDUSTRIAL PARKS AIMED AT SMALL AND MID-SIZED COMPANIES.

Action Step: Modify incentive programs and development regulations to encourage sustainable economic development activities such as the Tanner Street Initiative.

Figure 8-1
Proposed East Pond Park: Tanner Street Initiative



Action Step: Continue to seek federal and state funding for additional brownfields projects.

Action Step: Identify and consider taking properties in severe tax delinquency that could offer potential for commercial and light industry after remediation.

Action Step: Facilitate the acquisition, assembly and clean-up of larger parcels required for industrial redevelopment.

Action Step: Assist private developers with interest in brownfields redevelopment with a toolbox of available incentives and coordination of assembling properties.

Action Step: Establish the powers of a Redevelopment Authority particularly with the power of eminent domain over designated areas where land assembly is essential to viable industrial redevelopment.

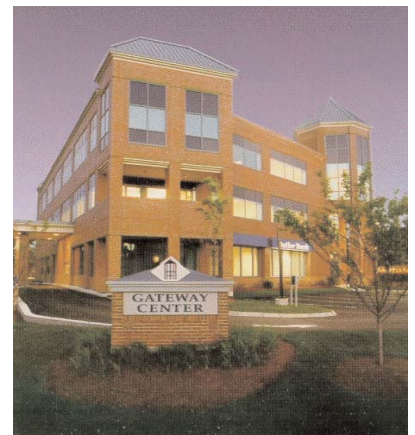
8.1.2 ENCOURAGE SMALL TO MID-SIZE BUSINESS VENTURES AND INCUBATOR PROJECTS IN A VARIETY OF SECTORS THAT PROVIDE SHORT-TERM RETURNS AND SERVE AS SUSTAINABLE LONG-TERM MODELS FOR AND GENERATORS OF NEW BUSINESS.

Action Step: Actively work to attract a variety of start-up businesses that represent multiple sectors of the economy.

Action Step: Partner with the Lowell Small Business Assistance Center and other pro-business organizations to assist growing businesses and new start-ups.

Action Step: Leverage existing service delivery partners to develop outreach programs with special attention to minority owned businesses.

Figure 8-2
Gateway Center



* **Brownfields** are vacant parcels of formerly industrial land with real or perceived contamination issues.

Action Step: Facilitate partnerships between businesses and research institutes at UMass Lowell to promote the sharing of resources that may enhance the viability of young companies.

Action Step: Actively promote City designations such as Renewal Community and other tax incentive programs attractive to prospective businesses.

Action Step: Cultivate a local creative class workforce to drive a more entrepreneurial local economy.

Figure 8-3
Wannalancit Mills



8.1.3 CREATE AND MANAGE AN INCUBATOR SPACE FOR RECENT GRADUATES FROM UMASS LOWELL, MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE, AND OTHER REGIONAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES.

Action Step: The City of Lowell's Economic Development office and a new Workforce Development Board should work towards finding a building that could be suitable for incubator space and simultaneously be a local center for training and workforce development. This building, ideally located in a redevelopment area, should be the center where the private and public sectors could partner with the objective of matching the supply and demand of the local workforce. The center would provide under skilled workers with advanced education and skills, including "soft skills" for ever-changing industries while providing the now derelict area with a key government presence.

8.1.4 STRENGTHEN AND ENHANCE EXISTING INDUSTRIAL AREAS AND DEVELOP NEW SITES FOR BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES.

Action Step: Protect industrial areas from encroachment of residential and institutional uses.

Action Step: Maintain and improve transportation access to the industrial centers.

Action Step: Identify other areas within Lowell that are eligible for mixed-use communities, combining residential uses with office and light industrial developments.

**Figure 8-4
Connector Park**



8.1.5 EXPAND THE CROSS POINT TOWERS TO BECOME AN "EDGE CITY"*, CHARACTERIZED BY A HIGH-RISE HIGHER-DENSITY COMMUNITY WITH OFFICE USERS BY DAY COMPLEMENTED BY NIGHT-TIME RESIDENTS SHARING RETAIL SERVICES, RESTAURANTS, AND STRUCTURED PARKING FACILITIES.

Action Step: Identify available properties for development in the district

Action Step: Actively recruit national and regional tenants to the area through the development of an aggressive marketing campaign.

Action Step: Diversify the mix of businesses to stabilize the complex over the long term.

**Figure 8-5
Cross Point Towers**



8.1.6 HELP TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL RESIDENTS BY HELPING PEOPLE IMPROVE THEIR SKILLS AND ABILITIES.

Action Step: The City's high school dropout rate is higher than the State's average dropout rate. Efforts in education reform should be made to reduce this trend. Also, efforts should be made to create career opportunities for students who may not pass MCAS tests.

Action Step: Improve adult education and "English as a Second Language" (ESL) classes. Recently, UMass Lowell reduced their ESL classes due to budget cuts. The large Asian and Hispanic population makes special educational efforts directed at non-English speaking students especially important. Solving these problems would significantly improve the skills of our local workforce.

* An **edge city** is an area of intensive high-density commercial development located away from the urban core, but near a highway, which typically includes office parks, shopping centers, and industrial parks, as well as multi family housing.

Action Step: Develop "soft-skills" curricula at local educational institutions to provide residents with skills needed to succeed in any field or career.

8.1.7 MAKE EFFORTS TO RETAIN AND FURTHER WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, PROVIDING A STRONGER LABOR POOL FOR NEW AND EXISTING BUSINESSES.

Action Step: Provide affordable and attractive housing opportunities that are suitable for recent graduates and young families.

Action Step: Improve the environment throughout the expansion of green space and recreational facilities.

Action Step: Expand the tourism sector in Downtown Lowell, providing young residents and daytime workers with an array of cultural and entertainment activities.

Action Step: Partner with local education and business establishments to develop workforce initiatives, particularly technical programs and "soft-skills" development

Figure 8-5
Expanding Entertainment Opportunities
in Downtown Lowell



8.1.8 CREATE A WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD TO COORDINATE LABOR RESOURCES LOCALLY AND REGIONALLY.

Action Step: Assess the current and future demands of the region's employers and outline the steps needed to match the local workforce with the employment base.

Action Step: Increase the coordination of training and retraining resources available to companies. This coordination should be done through partnerships involving local economic development agencies, the local Department of Employment and Training, local educational institutions, and the private sector.

Action Step: Increase the involvement of local employers in the curriculum provided by Lowell's educational institutions. Partnerships between local employers and educational institutions should be the key to ensure that students are receiving the necessary skills that will prepare them for the local job opportunities.

Action Step: Expand school-to-work programs. The Board should help local firms partner with the Lowell High-School, Middlesex Community College, Greater Lowell Technical High School and UMass Lowell to create programs that expose students to the "real world" and give students the "soft skills" needed to achieve success in today's workplace.

Action Step: The Board should encourage programs to link higher education with businesses, such as UMass Lowell's Center for Manufacturing and Industrial Competitiveness.

Action Step: Increase the amount and the flexibility of grants available for training programs.